

Agreements Respecting Marginal Lands

There is, as a matter of fact, enough matter in the resolution to rouse more than enthusiasm. Credit must be given to the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, for having submitted a brief to the Senate committee on land use on May 13, 1959.

The government should commend our farmers for the objective work they did in finding realistic solutions for their problems.

However, it is unfortunate that the former minister of agriculture should not have applied the recommendations which were made to him in the last two or three years.

We had to wait until Providence sent us a minister whose qualifications as a seer are greater than his farming experience.

The resolution we are now asked to approve is, to my mind, the second stage of a land improvement program.

I think that the first phase, before introducing such a project, should have consisted in setting up an advisory committee in each province which would, later, have been able to give counsel and advice and make recommendations adapted to local needs.

I did indeed advocate such legislation in this house on February 2, 1959, as we can see on page 578 of *Hansard*. I said this:

There would be much to say concerning another item of the Liberal program which is indirectly related to the establishment of an agricultural expansion bank. I am referring to the setting up of an agricultural advisory council in each province, on which the federal and provincial authorities would be represented.

Anyway, this recommendation was made by the committee in 1959.

This council would have to study the problems of agriculture within a province and make just and proper recommendations to the federal government.

I cannot agree with the central government enacting legislation for better land use to which the provinces would be required to contribute financially if they were not consulted. On the other hand, according to the experience of the United States in the field of assistance to marginal farms and before adopting such a program, we must define what constitutes a marginal family farm. What are the income possibilities of a family farm? What is the income potential of the members of the family both on and outside the farm? What are the available agricultural resources? What are the possible adjustments in farm operations or use to increase their revenues? To determine the costs of the program we need fairly accurate answers

to all those questions. I believe that a provincial advisory committee on agriculture would have been able to inform the ministers pretty accurately if the government had created one at the right time.

In his speech, the minister did not refer to the costs of this program. He did not tell us what the provincial and federal governments' responsibilities would be. He did not say how those responsibilities would be apportioned. He did not assess the costs of this program to each government; he did not say how the farmers who will engage in reforestation will live before they get any income out of it.

A prominent agricultural expert has told me that farmers who want to reforestation their lands should receive a reasonable amount for each reforested acre until the trees are there.

Certain farmers who will reforestation some five or ten acres will have to depend on an already inadequate income to provide for their families.

What will the government do to keep those families on the farm? We would have liked the minister to tell us more about that.

Mr. Chairman, the family farm is an essential part of Canadian economy. We depend on the farm to feed and clothe the ever-increasing population of this country.

Unfortunately, many farm owners lack adequate income to provide their family with a decent standard of living. Yet, it is recognized that when agriculture prospers, the whole nation benefits.

The Canadian farmer has a right to demand a standard of living equal to the level of the general economy to which he has contributed. With the policy of the Conservative government, we did not reach that goal.

Because of the cost-price squeeze, I do not feel that the present policy will improve the condition of the average farmer.

The resolution now before this house will have long term effects. Farmers will have to wait for a change of government before they can benefit from short term policies.

Mr. Pigeon: Mr. Chairman, would the hon. member for Drummond-Arthabaska permit me a question?

Mr. Boulanger: Yes, but beware of the answer.

Mr. Pigeon: Can the hon. member tell me what he thinks about the farm policy of the previous government which, when in power,